



Planning for the Future of Our Public Lands

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New Mexico's outstanding natural resources and rich culture often make casual visitors into permanent residents and it's no wonder. The public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rio Puerco Field Office (RPFO), is home to many natural and cultural resources. These resources and lands are finite, valuable and must be shared by all of us who live in and travel through the area.

To ensure continued stewardship of the RPFO lands, we are revising our long-term plan for the area, the Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan. This plan applies to public land in Bernalillo, Cibola, McKinley, Sandoval, Torrance and Valencia Counties, New Mexico.

During the plan revision process, we will update current management in response to new legislation, changing policies, urban growth, and changing uses of public land and its resources, with the goal of implementing the plan in March 2012. Between now and then, we will be looking at how we manage the area's resources and uses to decide if that management is working well or may need to be changed to better serve both the land and you, our public partners.

As part of this effort, we will be holding scoping meetings during April in several locations around our Planning Area, as listed below. We encourage and welcome you to attend the meetings to let us know about your interests, thoughts and ideas about the public land resources and



Rocky Mountain bee plant grows abundantly in Elk Springs, near Cuba.

uses. Written comments will be accepted through May 31, 2008, for this part of the process.

We will periodically keep you updated on the progress of the Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan Revision through newsletters like this.

Scoping Meetings (Open Houses)

Albuquerque Marriott Pyramid
5151 San Francisco Rd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
Wednesday, April 2, 2008
2:00-4:00 p.m. & 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Cuba Senior Center
16E Cordova St
Cuba, NM 87013
Monday, April 7, 2008
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Moriarty Civic Center
202 Broadway
Moriarty, NM 87035
Wednesday, April 9, 2008
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Convention Center
515 West High St
Grants, NM 87020
Wednesday, April 16, 2008
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Los Lunas Museum of Heritage and Arts
251 Main St SE
Los Lunas, NM 87031
Thursday, April 3, 2008
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Bernalillo High School Gym
250 Isidora Sanchez
Bernalillo, NM 87004
Tuesday, April 8, 2008
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Loma Colorado Library
755 Loma Colorado Dr NE
Rio Rancho, NM 87124
Thursday, April 10, 2008
5:00-7:00 p.m.

UNM-Gallup Campus
200 College Rd
Auditorium 248 C
Gallup, NM 87301
Thursday, April 17, 2008
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Preliminary Planning Issues



Ruins in the Ignacio Chavez Land Grant area are a vital link to our past.

According to Webster's Dictionary an "issue" is, "A point of debate or controversy; . . . something entailing alternatives between which to choose or decide; . . . something involving judgments or decisions." The BLM must choose or decide among alternative ways of managing the uses and resources of the public lands, and must document the reasons for those choices or decisions in its RMP.

The following are the BLM's preliminary issues to be discussed at the scoping meetings and addressed in the plan. We encourage you to ask questions and raise topics of concern to you at the meetings.

Issue 1—Land Tenure Adjustment

The checkerboard land ownership patterns of the RPFO Planning Area lead to conflicts arising from access and management of resources. For the RMP, BLM specialists and managers will consider the particular resource value of each parcel of public land and the most effective management. In addition, BLM staff will consider the holdings of the New Mexico State Land Office. As the result of this analysis, the agency may seek to dispose of, acquire, or exchange some public land parcels to protect sensitive resources or make management of adjacent public lands more effective.

Issue 2—Mineral and Energy Development

The BLM manages a variety of types of mineral and energy development (oil and gas, saleable and locatable minerals, geothermal resources, wind energy, and related transportation networks). Sometimes this type of development can conflict with other land and resource uses and values (for example, recreation or traditional cultural uses). For the RMP, BLM specialists and managers must identify areas in which energy and mineral development are suitable, unsuitable, or should be restricted.

Issue 3—Recreation and Visitor Services

As the population in the area continues to grow, the demand for recreational uses of public land and visitor services has also increased. Members of the public have expressed interest in using several portions of the RPFO Planning Area for hiking, camping and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Additionally, BLM guidelines for specially designated areas have changed, so previously designated areas must be reevaluated to comply with these new requirements.

Issue 4—Visual Resources Management (VRM)

BLM guidance requires that visual resource values in the Planning Area be managed in a way that meets the objectives assigned under one of four different VRM classes. To decide which areas should be managed under each class, BLM specialists will inventory visual resources and consider how to balance VRM objectives with the management of other uses.

Issue 5—Special Area Designations

In the existing Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan (1986, maintained and reprinted 1992), the BLM designated 23 areas as Special Management Areas (SMAs). However, under current

BLM guidance, this designation is not recognized as valid. Agency specialists and managers will analyze and evaluate which designation should be applied to each of these areas and other prospective special areas. The designations will be taken from the following list of valid administrative designations, which are found in the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).

- Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Back Country Byway
- National Recreation Area
- National Trail
- Research Natural Area
- Special Recreation Management Area
- Wild and Scenic River

Issue 6—Travel and Trails Management

The growth of population in the Planning Area and the resulting increased demand for a variety of uses on public land have made this issue challenging and complex. Agency managers and specialists must accommodate varied uses such as access to areas for recreation (including OHV use) and mineral development, but those uses must be considered in light of other resource programs such as visual resources management and traditional

cultural uses. For the RMP, blocks of public land in the Planning Area will be classified as open, limited, or closed to motorized travel.

Issue 7—Public Land-Urban Interface

Managing uses on public lands becomes more challenging in areas where these lands lie next to or near

population centers. Many residents of the cities of Albuquerque and Rio Rancho and the Village of Placitas expect to have a certain environment in their community, but public-land uses allowable (and in some cases, pre-existing) on adjacent parcels may or may not meet these expectations. Fire management, energy and mineral

development, recreation and visual resources management are some uses that may present management challenges for the BLM in urban interface areas. Some other affected areas in need of further analysis include the Candy Kitchen subdivision (east of Ramah), the Cuba/Torreon area, and the Sedora holdings (west of Los Lunas).



BLM employees collaborate on data gathering during a field trip.

Preliminary Management Concerns

Again, relying on Webster's definition, a "concern" is "a matter for consideration." Management concerns in the Planning Area may not be as challenging as the issues mentioned above, but include resources, uses and support functions that must be considered in the RMP under law and policy. Based on analysis, the RMP will incorporate appropriate management decisions for these concerns from the existing RMP and amendments, as well as new and updated decisions. Preliminary management concerns include the following.

- Air Quality
- Cave and Karst Resources
- Cultural Resources and Traditional Cultural Values
- Engineering
- Environmental Justice
- Paleontological Resources
- Social and Economic Concerns
- Soil Resources
- Vegetative Communities
- Water Quality
- Wildfire and Prescribed Fire Management

Further information may be obtained from the following sources.

- The BLM New Mexico's website, www.blm.gov/nm
- Joe Blackmon, RMP Team Lead, 505.761.8919
- Sabrina Flores, RMP Tech. Coordinator, 505.761.8794
- Email address, nm_rpfo_comment@blm.gov



Specialists examine a wildlife improvement in the Cañon Jarido area.

We're on the Web!

www.blm.gov/nm

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Our Vision: *To enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.*

Our Mission: *To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

Our Values: *To serve with honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, courage, and commitment to make a difference.*

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435 Montano Rd. N.E.
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